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ALIENATED YOUTH HERE AND ABROAD.

BY- KVARACEUS, WILLIAM C.

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THIS ARTICLE DISCUSSES THE "SECOND-CLASS CITIZENSHIP" OF YOUTH FROM ALL SOCIAL CLASSES AND COUNTRIES, AND PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND ABROAD WHICH PROVIDE YOUTH WITH A RESPONSIBLE, MEANINGFUL ROLE IN SOCIETY. IT IS FELT THAT IF SOCIETY FAILS TO CONSTRUCTIVELY TAP THE ENERGIES OF YOUTH, THEIR LATENT ENERGY AND SUBSEQUENT SOCIAL ALIENATION MAY BE CHANNELED INTO DELINQUENT ACTS. PURPOSEFUL PROGRAMS SUCH AS THE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH HOSTEL FEDERATION, THE PIONEERS AND KOMSONNOL YOUTH GROUPS IN RUSSIA, THE CITIZENSHIP IN ACTION PROGRAMS IN MASSACHUSETTS, AND SOME UNESCO PROGRAMS ACTIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN THE "PHI DELTA KAPPAN," VOLUME 45, NUMBER 2, NOVEMBER 1963. (LB)

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Alienated Youth Here and Abroad

Youth in many parts of the world is today a surplus commodity. As nature abhors a vacuum, so young people loath their in nihilo status. Their energy explodes in destruction and delinquency. The only answer is for society again to find a responsible role for its youth, says Mr. Kvaraceus. Here he describes promising efforts in many lands.

By WILLIAM C. KVARACEUS

ONE of the most hazardous occupations in developed and developing countries today is to be a youth. Whether the youngster is still sitting in school or now standing around the street corner as a recent dropout, he faces the double jeopardy of exile and irrelevancy.

With the steady and conclusive shift from farm and rural culture to urbanized and technological society, youth's importance and function have diminished to the point where youth now represents, in many parts of the world, a surplus commodity on a glutted market. Lacking any important role or function, youth faces the problem of growing up in exile or, worse, *in nihilo*. The disengagement or alienation is *both* from *self* and from *society*. It runs across the complete spectrum of class stratification and is as serious in the middle classes as in the lower-class groupings. And it will not be solved by the compulsory classroom to which we attach some artificial or belated work experience via the Youth Employment Act of 1963 now before Congress.

Automation, with its elimination of routine chores that once depended upon youthful hands, labor laws written in the spirit of safeguarding children and youth, and labor unions organized to protect the adult worker have all combined to diminish the need for strong young hands and minds. Even the compulsory classroom extending now through the teen-age years has tended to shunt young learners from the main stream of social, civic, and economic life-activity of family and community, thereby retarding the process whereby youth join the adult world. In a sense youth now experience an organized isolation from the regular community. The results can be seen in a youth stigmatized, infantilized, down-graded, and disengaged. Today's major youth problem centers around the need to regain a sense of self-respect and self-worth. Modern youth are shut out and shelved for deferred purposes; they have been forced to accept the status of second-class citizenship; they are a minority group disfranchised and exploited; they have been significantly omitted from our sessions here today both as passive listeners and as active participants, and their absence may be considered as a part of our adult pathology.

Just as nature abhors a vacuum, so do youth loath their *in nihilo* status. To be a nothing and a nobody, to be excluded from significant roles and tasks, to have little or no *raison d'etre,* to feel unneeded and unnecessary, to lack any voice or vote in important decisions concerning self, to be exiled for the life space of one's adolescence —all of this is hard, very hard indeed to take, especially when youth sees how badly adults around them are managing the business of the world.

It is doubly hard for youth when contrasted, for example, with the somewhat similar status of the aged and retired citizen who still retains the memory—if not the fire—of his youth as well as the right to cast his ballot. For youth, more than any other age group, has unbounded energy, wondrous imagination, unfolding intelligence, and a strong spirit of courage and self-determination; unfortunately these have all been diminished by a socially and economically induced low self-concept and by diffusion.

To prove themselves and to be heard, youth

MR. KVARACEUS *(Iota 526) is professor of education and director of youth studies, Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs, Tufts University.* *He presented this paper at a regional meeting on alienated youth sponsored by Phi Delta Kappa at Boston University last April 27. It incorporates two previous reports on the same topic: "Crusade and Crucible,"* Overseas, *January, 1963, and "Exile and Irrelevancy: Double Jeopardy for Modern Youth,"* WAY Forum, *Spring, 1963.*

have frequently followed the delinquency routes in various parts of the world. But even the delinquencies of modern youth are dull and unimaginative. Studying the patterns and forms that delinquent behavior has taken in different countries, I have been struck by the lack of originality and the complete standardization of aberrant behavior. Even youthful delinquency lacks creativity.

Nevertheless, juvenile delinquency in all countries today reflects a heavy investment of initiative and youthful energies—but not for social-civic purpose. This spilling of energy gives a strong hint of the vast reservoir of unused power that is available and which could be tapped for social, civic, cultural, and economic betterment.

The critical youth question facing all nations today—and there are no exceptions—asks: "How can we stimulate youth activities to tap the vast reservoir of youthful energy, enthusiasm, initiative, and imagination for personal, social, and civic betterment?"

Alternatives to Restless, Empty Lives

There are many alternatives to the restless, uneasy, and empty existence to which most adolescents have been consigned in the urbanized and automatized technical world. What can be done by working with youth, when the adult approach is informed and trusting, has been amply demonstrated in many parts of the world by the system of Associated Youth Enterprises. These youth enterprises involve a mutual collaboration of the UNESCO apparatus with many international youth organizations and/or governments. Since the inception of this program in 1955 more than a hundred youth projects involving initiative and international understanding have been undertaken in all parts of the world.

The International Youth Hostel Federation, for example, joined with UNESCO to sponsor a youth hosteling expedition that recently returned to London after a six-month crusade to India and Pakistan via Yugoslavia, Greece, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. This small band of young people, moving slowly and sometimes painfully in a motorized caravan, brought to various hostels films, sound recordings, and photographs on Western culture and collected similar materials for use and demonstration in Western countries. En route the group met with representatives of youth organizations, visited hostels, and discussed programs and problems with wardens, showed films and slides, and conducted interviews with press and radio.

This modern crusade of young people not only stimulated interest and assisted in the establishment of hostels linking Europe with Asia, but, more important, it promoted a better understanding between Orient and Occident.

Lately attention has been focused on assistance to emerging nations in Africa. An early cooperative youth endeavor tied UNESCO support to the Overseas Work Camp Program of the American Friends Service Committee on a Kenya work camp project operated by a number of Quaker organizations.

A group of six young men from different countries and a larger group of young workers from inside Kenya labored side by side in this project, which ran for two years. These young pioneers built huts for convalescents and constructed a part of a ward for tuberculosis patients under the Tuberculosis Rehabilitation Scheme organized by the Friends Hospital in Kaimosi. They also helped maintain a vegetable garden which provided light work for the patients and also served to feed them. At the same time, the project increased understanding by encouraging Africans and Europeans to live and work together in an atmosphere of harmony, self-help, and self-government.

In still another part of the world a student group focused on the problems of illiteracy. Participation of university students in combating illiteracy has been given high priority in the goals of the Coordinating Secretariat of National Unions of Students. A pilot project sponsored by the secretariat, the University of Bolivia, and UNESCO brought together fifty Bolivian students from eight universities. The experiment included a three-week seminar followed by an extended field operation high up on Oruro, 200 kilometers from La Paz, a mountain city of 185,000 inhabitants with an estimated illiteracy rate of 65 to 70 per cent.

These young students very quickly equipped themselves through a concentrated course of study and went into the field to try to apply what they had learned. A thousand illiterate workers from the mines and factories were contacted. Study groups of fifteen to twenty were scheduled to meet twice daily. Each student-teacher worked with one group. In addition to teaching reading and writing, these students also participated in a careful survey and diagnosis of the social, economic, and cultural factors associated with illiteracy and with the possible after-effects of reading instruction in a big city.

The phrase that I have heard more than any other in different countries and at various international conferences on youth is "initiative groups with social purpose." This phrase has more meaning and is closer to reality in Yugoslavia, Poland, and the USSR than in the United States. These Eastern countries take pride in reporting many examples of youth participation in important

and productive activities on the political and labor fronts. For example, the voluntary labor contribution of young Yugoslavs in road building has resulted in a youth monument dedicated to national development—concrete evidence of youth's participation, involvement, and importance.

The same theme is put forth for the Pioneers and the Komsomol youth groups in the Soviet Union. Here the political involvement is very pronounced, but the underlying message of youth's importance and youth's anticipated contribution to the national cause are stressed and magnified, never underestimated or minimized. When the activities of these youth groups are compared with the programs of the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, or the CYO, the American groups are differentiated by the fact that their energy investment is directed more to play than to work and the focus of activity is more often upon egocentric rather than on social-civic goals.

In the U.S. many communities have already moved to help youth help themselves. Here are a number of examples taken from one state—Massachusetts—that illustrate how schools and communities have included young people as worthy partners and citizens in their own right:

In the city of Newton, under Franklin Patterson, director of the Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs at Tufts University, new educational and action approaches to modern youth have been tried out in a pilot program[1] aimed to help youth re-engage themselves in shaping the destiny of a free society. A summer program in public affairs, aimed to relate youth to their school, their community, and the issues of the larger world, was carried out with a small group of high-school eleventh-graders in 1961.

The general design of this experiment called for (1) intensive study of selected problems drawn from crucial socio-civic areas of modern life; (2) parallel study of representative problems of the community, using problem-solving approaches with data collected by the students themselves; (3) performance of needed work in school and community; (4) self-government: participation in the planning and management of the summer program; (5) participation in a rich and varied schedule, with enough time for learning in depth.

Through study, discussions, and planning these youth considered crises in race relations, crises in culture, crises in the community, and crises of war and peace, working out through this process the responsibilities of the educated citizen.

Field surveys of formal and informal activities and facilities available to community youth in evening hours were carried out. Several major work-service projects much needed by the community were undertaken, e.g., cleaning and repainting the Newton Community Center. Other valuable opportunities for study, work-service, and possible civic action centered on cleaning up and improving a thirty-three acre park in the center of the city. The boys and girls studied the physical resources and how they might be further improved and developed. They examined alternative policies and plans for the park and decided upon recommendations to be placed before the city government. For direct action, youth went to work to clean out and improve the abandoned trails which had been allowed to deteriorate for many years.

Through this summer experience boys and girls of high-school age were engaged in the study and solution of important community problems. Together they studied, planned, and engaged in work-service; together they participated in decision making and self-government.

Helping the Mentally Maimed

In two other communities, Arlington and Andover, high-school youth every Tuesday and Wednesday assist professional workers to care for the mentally maimed in a nearby Veterans Administration hospital. These boys and girls perform many different kinds of duties. They work with nurses and technicians in social service, manual arts therapy, the library, the pharmacy, and in occupational therapy. Other youngsters perform important tasks in dental laboratories and in the hospital's general offices. Through such service youth not only help out in the important task of aiding patients but they themselves profit by gaining insights in their own career development. They also acquaint themselves with the problems of those who are afflicted in mind and who may tomorrow return to the community to live a normal life.

Citizenship in Action programs include many youth in many communities under the supervision of Thomas J. Curtin, director of civic education, Massachusetts Department of Education. Wareham High School girls organized a Future Nurses Club to stimulate interest in nursing and to render community service through volunteer work in local hospitals. Students from the Wachusett Regional High School, working through their student council and Future Teachers of America, participated in the American Field Service Exchange Student Program. As a result, two exchange students from Indonesia and New Zealand visited the community and three local students presented their candidacy for the "Americans Abroad" phase of the program. Funds for these

[1] Franklin Patterson, *Public Affairs and the High School*. Medford, Massachusetts: The Lincoln Filene Center for Citizenship and Public Affairs, 1962, 43 pp.

activities were raised by group action through various school events and a Bonds for Democracy drive. These youths plan to continue participation in projects for better international understanding.

Other students in North Andover produced a sound and color film about their high school in order to inform the citizens of the community and the members of each new entering class concerning its organization, procedures, and curriculum. The entire production, depicting school life and the overall program, was produced, directed, and financed by the students, assisted by faculty members. Through various activities the amount necessary for production ($500) was raised. Work on this project took a year and a half. Since its completion, the film has been shown to more than twenty organizations in the local area. These are but a few examples of youth initiative and involvement (for social purpose) in one state.

GIVE YOUTH RESPONSIBLE ROLE

THE explosive nature of isolated and immobilized youth is a common hazard in many big cities of the world today. Youthful energy, intelligence, and initiative can be turned either in the direction of destruction and delinquency or in the direction of constructive activity and creativity. These powers of youth cannot be contained for long in a vacuum. Youth must be released from their exiled status and from their enforced immaturity. Given a responsible role, youth have shown that they can, and they will, find their identity, their independence, and their destiny.

Model Youth Conservation Camp

► Ninety school dropouts in Indiana have recently undergone a two-month camp experience in what has been called a model youth conservation camp for the nation. Campers, all between 18 and 23 years of age, unemployed, and without criminal records, were paid $75 monthly, plus room and board. Sponsored by the Indiana Youth Council, Conservation Department, National Guard, Employment Security Division, and Department of Public Instruction, the camp is located on the site of a former Civilian Conservation Corps camp vacant for two decades except for brief use by a 4-H club. The camp has a National Guard colonel and a former principal as co-directors and offers a rigid work and study program with heavy emphasis on vocational education. The school program emphasizes development of basic skills, with a special reading program designed by Skill Center, Inc., of Chicago, since a reading handicap is the typical camper's largest problem.

Negro Aspiration, Achievement

► A career study of forty-six Negro high-school graduates in Washington fails to support the assumption that Negro achievement is limited by low aspiration. All of the subjects had professional aspirations at the time of high-school graduation, but five years later only seven had graduated from college, while eighteen others were still in attendance and seven others had had some college, four of whom intended to return for more. These above-average Negro high-school graduates had suffered frequent unemployment and underemployment. Most of the positions they were able to obtain, whether full-time or part-time, temporary or "permanent," were of the menial type traditionally open to Negroes. The study, by Eunice S. Grier, is available from the Washington Center for Metropolitan Studies, 1726 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington 6, D.C., for $3. A 24-page interpretive summary is distributed without charge.

Is Gang 'Rumble' Disappearing?

► The classic gang "rumble" seems to be on the way out.

The trend of juvenile gangs these days, reflected even in their fighting pattern, is towards a "sophistication," according to Saul Bernstein, professor of social work at Boston University.

Bernstein recently completed a seven-month study of anti-social delinquent teen-age groups of minority origin in poverty-stricken areas. Included in the study were nine major cities—Boston, New York City, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Cleveland, Detroit, Washington, D. C., and Philadelphia.

By and large, Bernstein said, the gang tends to be less obvious today. Members seldom flaunt dark-colored jackets advertising who they are. Nor is the gang's name splashed on walls the way it used to be.

The fighting pattern particularly reflects this "cool" attitude, Bernstein said. Instead of the "rumble," in which opposing gang members met at a pre-arranged spot for a showdown, many gangs today indulge in "snagging." This consists of having a lookout member find a place passed daily by the rival gang member. Then five or six from the first group, all of whom may be quietly dressed, wait for him and methodically beat him up. Just as quietly, they return home, change their clothes, and go about their business. No show of power—no advertising—all "cool."

Bernstein feels that on the whole less violence characterizes these groups than used to be the case. This is due in part to the marshaling of community resources, particularly police activities, to help the youngsters find more interesting things to do. They are encouraged by youth agencies to participate in athletics, take trips, and hold dances.